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Madness Never Looked So Pretty

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Author Bio

Writing has always been a huge love of Aysia's, but their true passion is in marine biology, where she plans to become a Shark biologist. When it pertains to writing, it's difficult for her to plan what she writes; they only do it when inspiration hits - which keeps them from getting frustrated with their writing.

MADNESS NEVER LOOKED SO PRETTY



AYSIA STEPHENS

The wheels of my suitcase squeal parallel to dim music. Sound waves and vibrations bounce off each tangible object around me: walls, tables, lights, chairs. I could not see them, but I was aware of their essence. I'm unable to make out the instruments of the objects, no, objects don't have instruments. Instruments are objects. What has instruments? The music! The dim music. It's a familiar noise, a sound I've heard before but where? I could never say. The music makes my lips twitch and my eyebrows rise in delight as it brought beloved memories from two years back. Or maybe it was four years back. I was never one for time. What I believe to be a viola and a chorus of flutes can be heard, but who cares? I'm always right in my mind. Violin, trumpet, oboe, it doesn't matter. The music conforms to me. The music wants me to be how I was once before. Pristine and perfect like an old porcelain doll. But as the days went by, I grew cracks and lacerations. I adored them. Everything was done for me and exactly how I liked. No one told me no because I never let them.

An old friend of mine that always donned a wide grin gifted me the suitcase that dragged behind me. The fabric is battered up and stained. Its blue and beige colors are shining parallel to the tile floor I dance across. So pretty and loved, but no one else thinks so. No, it's shown as archaic to others. It carries a bizarre odor that singses my nose hairs, but I rid myself of those a long time ago. I remember the music calling to me when I did it, but it was muffled and distant. It's even wiped my eyebrows clean off before. The smell, not the music. A man that I met multiple times before in my bathroom mirror redid my eyebrows for me, free of charge, and I did an outstanding job. Not I. Him. His hands knew exactly what I needed and where. The man never said a word but always had a welcoming smile on his face accompanied with his plump cheekbones. I had laughed at him and called him a jokester. I even licked clean the tomato sauce he had leaking on his face. It tasted odd, but I could have eaten it every day. I haven't seen him in a while, though. I wonder where he went? He felt like home to me. Always watching and always waiting. He resembled a bird chirping in the early morning- annoying, but welcomed.

I wish I knew how long I've walked this path. I'm unaware of the time at all. The clocks on the wall are broken. The hands seem to laugh at my misfortune, but that's okay. No one is ever late or on time if there is no time to count on. The lights chaotically nailed to the wall burn my

eyes with an easy to miss flicker every four hundred and twenty-six seconds. I believe it's every four hundred fourteen seconds, but I guess I'm wrong. The clocks told me that, but how can they tell me the time when time doesn't work here? Whenever I asked them, the music got really loud, deafening almost. I just learned to keep my mouth sewn shut.

With each step, I can feel my knees sliding back and forth. They frequently pop out of place if I'm walking or standing on them for too long. After my eyebrow appointment in my mirror, I went to see my doctor. The doctor said I have loose tendons. He tried to comment on my eyebrows, but he was cut short. He lost his PhD and his legs to an accident. I got to see the accident firsthand. It was really cool, but he didn't think so. He just kept screaming. I shushed him and told him "Quiet! You're ruining the show!" but he just wouldn't shut up. He's such a buzzkill. But anyways, his opinion doesn't mean anything. He can't give me advice on the tendons in my knees when he doesn't even have any. My knees hurt, yes, but I'm too young to have knee problems, so I have decided that I don't have them. I don't even know what tendons are. Neither does the doctor. Anymore, at least.

There are four lights on the walls with each light having its own pet table. The dark wood of the tables is lit with white light shining down, and the tables are overflowing with golden knobs, their scratches disappearing and reappearing with each flicker. Every table sits perched with speakers glued to their knobs. They're almost like wheels! And they play that music too. It's loud, and makes it hard to think, but I can't help but press my ears right up to them. Whenever I get the chance, at least. Most times when I try to reach out to the pretty speakers, they get farther away. Everything is always far and never near. The lights, the furniture, the door creaked open at the end of the path. It rarely gets closer. My feet are moving, I'm sure of it. I can see them stepping in front of each other, but nothing else is moving. It doesn't seem my suitcase is moving either. At least, I don't think so. I can only hear it. If I turn around to look at my suitcase, I don't see it. I see the lights, the tables, and the door. Any direction I look I only see what's in front of me but how do I know if that is the front if I can't see my sides or my back? I can never see what's behind me because what's behind me is in front of me and what's in front of me is all around me. There's no time, there's no direction, there's nothing. It only seems to be me. But that's all I need, yeah? That's what my friend always told me. Remember, my friend who did my eyebrows? He made me look so pretty. He always told me to take care of myself, no matter what it takes. I hope I've made him proud.

I counted that every two hundred and fifty-three seconds, the door at the end of the hallway creaks open. Whenever it does, the dim music rises in volume. I don't know what its problem is. Every time I do anything,

it screams in my ear, sometimes until I hear something pop. I like to pretend the popping noise is the music's vocal chords. Music seems to elevate around me quite often for reasons I used to be unsure of. I think I know why now. It's lonely, but I couldn't be its friend. No. I wouldn't dare. It's mean to me.

The same music played when the wonderful man who fixed my eyebrows worked on me. I've seen him all my life but luckily, he's only had to fix my eyebrows once. I was sitting in a blue and beige rolling office chair with a towel wrapped around me. He was quiet, like a little mouse sneaking some cheese, and very precise when he was fixing me. He had just bought a new pack of razors the other day, so I knew I was going to look wonderful after he was done. I liked to picture him as a well-known surgeon. Whenever I felt uneasy, I would look up and he would be staring right back at me with that wide smile and his yummy tomato sauce face. My mouth twitched in unison with his. Once he started chopping at the hairs above my eyes, all his rich tomato sauce was now on me! I thought I would've been upset, enraged even, but I was so calm and felt so sweet. Honored that he would share this experience with me. It ran down the sides of my face, in my eyes, and I even opened my mouth to welcome some inside. I think I liked tasting it from his face better, but they oddly had the same flavor, so I was okay with it. By this time, the relaxing violas and flutes were intense enough to replace the beating of my chest. I was my own conductor! The final fix wasn't completely done until a month or so had passed. He told me they had to set in and heal. I was instructed not to touch them, but I couldn't help it. I was stunning. Ethereal, if I may. I had to wrap a cloth around where my eyebrows used to sit, so they could finalize without prying eyes. He told me to be careful of infections, but how could I care about infections when my eyebrows looked so good? So smooth and hairless, yes, I was a model. I would frequently sneak off and remove the cloth, touching the bumpy skin every day with a smile. I was so happy. I just wish the music felt the same. It was louder than I had ever heard it that day. I told the music with a huge grin what the man had done, but it failed to match my enthusiasm. It really bummed me out. He had worked so hard on them! I argued with the music all night, but it didn't care. No matter then, more for me! The music just played all night long.

As I kept prancing down my path, I could hear footsteps that were not my own. It wasn't the pestering clocks, it wasn't the electrical buzz that occurred whenever the lights flickers, and it wasn't the rolling of my suitcase. I thought it was the golden knobs on the tables shaking whenever the scratches would announce themselves, but that wasn't it either. I slowed my walking to lazy shuffling, nine footsteps a minute, and I would still hear the dull padding of bare feet hitting the floor. Albeit they were delayed by three seconds after my own, but nothing

echoes on this path. Those footsteps were not of mine. I wonder if they were here to see how pretty my new eyebrows looked. Or maybe to find me a different doctor for my knees? To be fair, I haven't had any noticeable problems with my knees since I left his office, so I think he was maybe lying. Saying I needed help and that I was dangerous to be around. I didn't understand how loose tendons could make someone dangerous, so I just tuned all the voices out until it drifted off into my familiar music.

Apparently, my doctor had been worried about my eyebrows and how well they were healing. That confused me though because I thought I was there for my knees. It made me upset that he didn't trust the man who made me look better. I sat so still in front of the mirror for that man! He wouldn't do me wrong, he couldn't. I think my doctor was just angry that I was going to look so well, and he wouldn't, so I helped him look prettier! When I had seen him, he would always complain about how he thought his legs were too fatty and would soak in whatever he ingested, and it irritated me to hear his complaints. So, I did him a favor and fixed his legs up while violas and flutes flowed in the background. I was already in a good mood from the eyebrow appointment I had beforehand anyways. I wanted to share the excitement! It felt like I was a star in a movie from the way he was screaming. I titled the movie "The Accident." Good, right? The doctor was a doctor no longer; we had switched roles! Now he's my patient like I was to the man who shaped my eyebrows. To go an extra mile, I even shredded that slip of paper he had hanging in his office and made him a new one that said his new profession. I wasn't allowed back in to see my work, unfortunately. But with my help, we were both on our path. He was lucky to have a surgeon like me.

The footsteps behind me were getting closer and louder. They bothered me more than I had originally thought. I kept my eyes forward. Afterall, what else could I do? The lights now flickered every seventeen seconds. The door at the end of the hallway slammed open and shut every twenty-nine seconds. My suitcase violently shook in my hand, and it snapped my wrist at an odd angle. I'll fix it eventually.

The noise was starting to become displeasing. Not even the violas and flutes can cheer me up now, but they haven't been doing a good job at it lately anyways. More instruments filled in to help ease my mind, but none worked. No woodwind, string, percussion, or brass instrument could flatten my unease. The clocks thought it was hilarious, but I didn't. I was worried. The knobs that rested on the tables started to rattle and their scratches spilled onto the floor. How could a surgeon such as me fix this? I haven't been in the field for long, but I can think of something. But I need space. I can't think of anything with these ragged breaths huffing down my back. They were unsettling. But that's okay. I still had my lips upturned in a grin.

Shake it out. That's how I can fix this. The flicker of the lights, the laughing clocks, the knobs, the scratches, the door, the bodies looming behind me. There's no time, there's no direction, what's one more to add? I slowed my walking back down to nine steps a minute and shook my head. I banged my head up and down, left and right, any direction I could. I even circled my neck. I could feel something hitting my forehead, but I liked it, so I kept banging. My head started to pound, my feet couldn't continue to walk in a straight line anymore, more rose red tomato sauce dripped down my face and stung my eyes, but it was fine because I'm moving. Not walking and staying in place, no, I'm advancing. The slamming door drew closer and closer to my outstretched hand and my grin turned into a full-blown smile.

It's finally over. My path is ending. The previous violas and flutes that were once an orchestra changed. I didn't like it. First it was music. But then it turned into panting. Whispering. Talking. Yelling. Screaming. Please God make it stop. I don't like it. But I still had my smile and my pretty eyebrows. They're so beautiful and so perfect. They were only the first step but now I'm almost done. The body that was behind me feels to have become more than one and appears to want to stop me. Multiple hands are on my arms, my waist, my ankles, my grin, my stunning eyebrows. They don't want me to go. They want to stop my progress but what for? I'm finally getting what I want, what I deserve. I deserve to be pretty. My path to beauty is ending and I couldn't be happier. Why can't they be happy with me? I feel sorry for them. I would fix them like I fixed my doctor, but I don't have time. My exit is here.

With my head still bobbing back and forth, I stumbled to the door and reached for the opening with my limp wrist. It's here. I'm done. The end of my path is everything I could've imagined. I couldn't feel happier and I couldn't feel more pretty. In front of me, I saw my friend who fixed my eyebrows with his welcoming smile. He cleaned up his tomato sauce. He's everything I want to be. And everything I will soon be. He has such a pretty face. I opened my mouth in joy and stuck out my tongue to catch my own tomato sauce that was sliding down into my gaping maw. It tasted so nice. It tasted like happiness and beauty. What I deserved. This is all what I deserved. The yelling bodies and their hands holding me from every direction gripped harder to hold me steady. I felt something so soft touching my face all over, pulling me into a hug, whispering in my ear about something I couldn't comprehend. I hated it. It almost distracted me. Almost. But it's okay because I don't need them. My path has ended. Grin still unwavering, I shook out of their hold and hit the floor.

I'm gorgeous.

Author Statement

"'Madness Never Looked So Pretty' is a person's insatiable need to feel beautiful in the eyes of others. That they feel they can only feel whole and worthy if they see themselves as objectively gorgeous, which led to their demise in the end. No pronouns are used within this story to allow the character to fit into whatever or whoever the readers imagine when intaking the story, as beauty has a different meaning for everyone."

